



Hazing Awareness

This booklet contains several tools which can be used at the unit level to conduct Hazing Awareness Training required by references (b) and (c). When the training is complete, the participants will know and be able to express each of the elements on the Road Map below.

Road Map

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Hazing Awareness</h2>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commandant's Policy regarding hazing• Hazing in real CG terms• Responsibility regarding hazing incidents• Procedures for reporting hazing incidents

References

- a. Coast Guard Regulations (COMDTINST M5000.3), Article 4-1-15-A-(3)
- b. Coast Guard Personnel Manual (COMDTINST M1000.6), Chapter 8J
- c. COMDTINST 1610.1, Hazing Awareness Training

Article 4-1-15-A-
(3), USCG
Regulations...

“A Commanding Officer of a Coast Guard unit is responsible for the well-being of the personnel in the command and shall:

...

(3) Prohibit unit introductory initiations or hazing of personnel. Traditional initiations, such as for advancement to Chief Petty Officer or crossing the Equator, the International dateline, etc., are permitted, but they shall not include any degradation of character, sexual overtones, bodily harm or undue harassment, and shall be conducted with the complete knowledge of and oversight by the Commanding Officer...”

Article 4-3-2,
USCG
Regulations

“A. The authority and responsibility of an Officer in Charge corresponds to that of a commanding officer. Provisions of these regulations and of other instructions pertaining to commanding officers are applicable to officers in charge...”

Self
Assessment

Have class participants complete the self-assessment questions and then place them aside for use later. (Master copies are provided at the end of the module).

Pass out copies of the **U. S. COAST GUARD Hazing Policy Statement**. (Master copies are provided at the end of the module).

Choose 6 members of the class and ask each to read one paragraph of the statement. After each paragraph, discuss what was just read.

ASK: What is being said in that paragraph?

ASK: What does it mean to you?

ASK: Are there any words or phrases that need clarification?

Once the entire statement has been read and discussed in part, tie the six paragraphs together by asking the class to write a summary of it using 15 words or less. (It's surprising to see how much thought participants put into this exercise.) Then select several volunteers to share their summary.

ASK: What are some examples of what might be considered hazing *outside* the Coast Guard?

Hazing
Scenarios

Now pass out the hazing incident scenarios. An effective way to process these is to divide the class into 2 discussion groups and let each group work through a scenario.

STATE: Incidents like these are what put the spotlight on hazing and the impact it has on the organization.

Have the groups process the scenario using the following discussion points. If possible, make these discussion points visible to everyone using an overhead projector or chart and easel, etc.

Hazing Awareness

What do you suppose was the primary intent of the "initiation"?

In the scenario, when did the event cross the line from being a morale-enhancing "harmless practical joke" to hazing?

What specific events in the scenario constituted hazing? Why?

At what point should the event have been stopped? Who was responsible for stopping it?

After the scenarios are processed, have each group read their scenario out loud and present the answers to the discussion points.

Now, have the participants refer to the self-assessment questions they filled out earlier and facilitate a discussion around the issues covered there.

Q&A

During the training, several questions may arise about hazing. The following Q&As are from Enclosure (2) of COMDTINST 1610.1, Hazing Awareness Training.

Q Why is the Coast Guard placing such great emphasis on the prevention of hazing?

A The severe nature of the incidents described in this Enclosure helped bring this issue to the forefront. When initial inquiries regarding the magnitude of the Servicewide problem were made, the prevailing opinion of most Coast Guard members was that hazing was not a widespread problem and that these were just isolated incidents. However, further research revealed that hazing was more widespread than initially believed. The Hazing Policy Statement was developed to make our personnel aware of the problem and its consequences.

Q Why does the Coast Guard still allow Chiefs' initiations? Don't Chiefs initiations expose people to indignity and humiliation?

A Chiefs' initiations are OPTIONAL for those individuals who WILLINGLY participate, and are conducted by experienced personnel with extensive service and a clear understanding of Service norms, morals, values, and respect for individual dignity. Both the individual and those conducting the initiation know the purpose and meaning of the "rite of passage to Chief." It is a non-threatening experience. Once the initiation is completed, all participants dress in their uniform for a formal presentation, reading of the Chief Petty Officer's Creed, and pinning on of rank devices. The Creed and final stages of the initiation enhance individual self-esteem and explain why the indignities were imposed upon the initiatee. These initiations are attended by command leadership personnel who are totally responsible for ensuring that there is no degradation of character, sexual overtones, bodily harm or undue harassment.

Q Why does the Coast Guard still allow crossing the equator, dateline, Arctic and Antarctic Circle initiations? Don't they include physical contact and actions that can be degrading and humiliating?

A These initiations are command sponsored and attended by command leaders who are totally responsible for ensuring that the initiations do not include any degradation of character, sexual overtones, bodily harm or undue harassment. This seagoing tradition is also voluntary for the initiatee, international in character, and of long standing duration. At the conclusion of the initiation, a ceremony is held and certificates presented to those who were initiated.

Q Events like "tacking on crows" and throwing members over the side on promotion are Service traditions and are relatively harmless. Why not allow them?

A These events were banned because of their impromptu and unsupervised nature. They are not command sponsored or attended by command leadership. While often conducted under the pretext of fun or enjoyment, they frequently result in debasement of personal dignity or physical injury to a Service member.

Q If someone volunteers to submit to an initiation like "tacking on crows," is it still a violation of the hazing policy?

A Yes! The most likely reason for voluntarily submitting to this type of initiation is fear of rejection or ridicule by peers. Whatever the reason, volunteering for physical abuse is like waiving the right to be a human being. Furthermore, if one member of a command voluntarily submits to this type of initiation, other members of the command might feel compelled to "volunteer."

Q Don't unit initiations serve a positive purpose by allowing someone new to be accepted as a team member?

A The rite of passage is important to unit morale and "Esprit de Corps." However, there are constructive ways of accomplishing this. Sporting events and job related challenges are examples of rites of passage that do not subject our personnel to ridicule or possible injury.

Q Does the ban on hazing and unit initiations include practical jokes like sending a new crewmember for a bucket of prop wash?

A No. Practical jokes can provide a means of acceptance and by themselves do not constitute hazing. However, then practical jokes are used to ridicule, isolate and exclude Service members, especially when personnel have objected, the practice may result in a violation of the hazing policy statement. Common sense must be used at all times. If the Commanding Officer determines that a practical joke has resulted in a violation of the hazing policy statement, the Commanding Officer is required to take appropriate action.

Q How is a hazing policy going to prevent future incidents?

A The purpose of publishing a policy statement was to make all personnel aware of what does/does not constitute hazing. That, coupled with a knowledge of the consequences for violating the policy, will work toward eliminating hazing in the Coast Guard.

Close the training session by reviewing each member's responsibility if they are a victim or merely a casual observer of hazing. End with a strong COMMAND STATEMENT in support of the hazing policy.

USCG Hazing
Policy
Statement

“The practice of hazing will not be tolerated in the U. S. Coast Guard. Aside from serving no useful purpose, the demeaning and abusive activities associated with hazing inhibit performance, debase personal dignity, and can result in serious injury. To prevent it, we must develop an awareness of what constitutes hazing and understand the negative impact of such activities.

Although a general definition is difficult to provide, it typically occurs in connection with various impromptu and unsupervised “initiations” and is a result of the erroneous perception that the event gives license to subject an individual to personal abuse. Examples include: tacking on crows; throwing personnel over the side from ship or pier; application of grease, oil, or other noxious substances on a member’s body; forcing consumption or encouragement to consume excessive quantities of alcohol; shaving of heads or removal of body hair; offensive hitting, slapping, or touching another individual; and any other action which subjects an individual to ridicule or embarrassment.

Some incidents of hazing have been condoned as unit initiations or innocent jest without intent to harm. Although the actions or verbal harassment may be considered humorous by some observers, they often create a real fear in the minds of the victims. Further, they undermine the very morale and “Esprit de Corps” they purport to advance.

Traditional service “initiation ceremonies”, including Chief Petty Officer and crossing the equator, dateline, Arctic, and Antarctic Circle initiations are authorized. However, Commanding Officers shall ensure these events do not include any degradation of character, sexual overtones, bodily harm, or undue harassment.

Hazing constitutes military misconduct and its prevention is an all-hands responsibility. Victims and casual observers shall report all violations of this policy. There is no place in the Coast Guard for dehumanizing treatment and every incident of hazing shall be investigated and appropriate disciplinary actions initiated against the perpetrators, including those in the chain of command who tacitly condone such practice either by their inaction or by neglecting to investigate reported suspected incidents.

Our success as an organization very much depends on our people. A healthy, positive and professional work environment is essential to enable each of us to contribute. Strong support of this policy will help us maintain such an environment.”

Hazing Self-
Assessment
Discussion
Points

By working through these discussion points, we hope that you will begin to think about some aspects of hazing that you may not have thought of before. As well as you can, write down your responses to the points. Keep them private. Later in the session, you'll have the opportunity to share your responses.

What do you think hazing is?

Describe one or more incidents of hazing you have observed or you have been subjected to.

What do you think some of the consequences of hazing are?

Do you think hazing is a problem?

Hazing Scenario

1

This is a summary of an actual hazing incident aboard a Coast Guard unit.

A Seaman Apprentice, newly reported to a Coast Guard vessel, wrote his Congressman alleging that he had been physically assaulted and abused during an initiation conducted by crewmembers of the ship. The subsequent investigation into the allegations established that for several years a “tradition” had been established aboard this vessel whereby the junior petty officers in the crew (up to E-5) conducted an initiation of new recruits arriving directly from the Recruit Training Center. The morale-oriented events were approved by the unit Commanding Officer. The officers, chiefs, and first class petty officers aboard the ship eventually stopped attending these initiations. Permission to conduct the initiation was usually granted by the command at the end of the workday when the ship was underway. Over the years, different leaders of the junior petty officers came to conduct the initiation using their own values and ideas.

The investigation established that the initiates were stripped naked, blindfolded, and escorted into a forward area of the ship where supervision was not present. The initiates were required, one at a time, to stand in and then to sit in ice water. They were hooked up by their fingertips to a low-voltage generating device that could be hand-cranked to provide an electrical shock. This procedure was determined by the junior petty officers to be “safe”. Initiates were required to drink and eat various food products that were, at best, distasteful. Finally, a number of inappropriate acts of a sexual nature, including forceful grabbing and touching, were employed to embarrass the initiate.

When the practice was uncovered through investigation efforts, the crewmembers that participated in the initiation practices felt that it was “no big deal” and it was being blown out of proportion. Most of the crewmembers that had been initiated in this fashion felt that they were finally “part of the group” and were glad that the initiation occurred; because it made them feel accepted at the unit.

The petty officers that led the initiation practice had developed tremendous authority and power among the junior petty officers and non-rated persons aboard the ship. Most of this power derived from the control they exercised during the initiation process.

Hazing Scenario
2

This is a summary of an actual hazing incident aboard a Coast Guard unit.

This incident involved a Seaman Apprentice reporting from basic training to a Coast Guard vessel. The Seaman had been aboard less than a month when he went AWOL. While away, he wrote his Congressman alleging that he had been subjected to continuous physical and sexual abuse at the hands of the other deck force non-rates. This led to his contemplating suicide and ultimately to his decision to go AWOL. An investigation confirmed that from the time he arrived on board and continuing until he went AWOL, the victim was, in fact, subjected to flagrant abuse.

Initially, the Seaman was verbally harassed as the “new boot” when some crewmembers returned drunk from liberty. He was awakened after taps and coerced into doing push-ups. On one occasion, he was given several condoms, still in their wrappers, and told to blow them up. Another crewman later told him that he did not have to do that. He was subjected to being grabbed and poked in inappropriate areas while clothed as a part of his “right of passage”. He was subjected to questions of an explicit sexual nature and asked to get pornographic magazines for the other crewmembers. His towel was taken while showering and other crewmembers made offensive, derogatory comments about him while he walked back to the berthing area. He was further harassed by crewmembers having had ice poured down his pants and being covered by shaving cream and shampoo. He was told that he would have to get a tattoo administered by other crewmembers. He was teased about having the “duty rack” with the implication that people would come to him for sexual favors.

He was reluctant to use the chain of command to report the abuse because he was told in boot camp about “accidents at sea” happening to those who did. Further contributing to his sense of isolation and hopelessness was his belief that “since petty officers and other officers witnessed and heard about many of the things that went on, I felt that they would not do anything if I talked to them”.

The above activities resulted in the victim suffering from acute post-traumatic stress disorder.